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THE
MONTHLY



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GULL
BULLETIN

Volume 47

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February 1965

Number 2

BIRD SONG AND BIRD COMMUNICATION

Dr. Jared Verner will give a talk on "Approaches to the Study of Bird Song and Bird Communication" at our regular February meeting. Dr. Verner is a Research Associate in animal behavior at the University of California in Berkeley.

This meeting will be held **Thursday, February 11**, in Oakland. The evening will start with a no-host dinner scheduled for **6:30 p.m.** at Lovely's Buffet, 336 Grand Ave. near Perkins. (Price of dinner will vary with your selection from the regular menu, but will probably run around \$1.50 to \$2.00). Our regular meeting will begin at **7:30 p.m.** in the Rotary Natural Science Center, Lakeside Park. Lovely's and the Natural Science Center are within very easy walking distance of each other so you'll only need to park once.

Plan to come and to bring friends both for dinner and the regular meeting if possible — but for the meeting in any event. You'll enjoy it!

— THOMAS B. WILLIAMSON, *Program Chairman*

FIELD TRIPS FOR FEBRUARY

Tuesday, February 9, near and in Redwood Canyon Park, Oakland. Just north of the park there are glorious Manzanita groves, which no one should fail to see, once a year at least, before fire or "development" destroys them. Also to be seen are Chinquapins, Silk Tassel bushes, Leatherwood, and other spring shrubs. Because the ground slopes in places and may be slippery, it will be traversed more safely with the help of a staff or cane (or old umbrella). After lunch in the picnic grounds at the south end of the park birding should be good along the stream among the Redwoods. Meet at 9 a.m. at the north gate (where the warden's stone house is) on Skyline Boulevard. Transportation will be provided, if needed, at the Altheim, 1720 MacArthur Boulevard, between 8 and 8:30. From San Francisco take the AC Transit bus at 7:30 or 7:50 (not the 7:20 Express); in the East Bay, take bus 15, 34, or 57. Leader, Marshall Jencks, 534-9353.

Sunday, February 21, to Thornton and areas west of Lodi. The main feature of this trip is the spectacular views of sandhill cranes. In addition, ducks, geese, gallinules, and white-tailed kites may be seen on farmlands and adjacent ponds. A side trip to Courtland to view long-eared owls will be made if the owls cooperate. Meet at 9:30 a.m. in the town of Thornton, which is reached by turning south from Walnut Grove on the Sacramento

River Road, Route 24. Allow 2½ hours driving time from the Bay Area. The distance to Thornton is about 80 miles. Bring binoculars, telescopes, warm clothing, lunch, and interested friends. Leader, Phil Smith, LO 9-9451.

— HAROLD G. PETERSON, *Field Trips Chairman*

FIELD TRIP FOR CHILDREN

There will be a field trip led by Mrs. Roberta Long on **Saturday, February 13** from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. You will meet at the entrance to Golden Gate Park on 43rd Avenue and Fulton Street by the Chain of Lakes. Children under eight years of age must be accompanied by an adult and all adults must be accompanied by children. Bring your lunch.

Birds and Their Bodies

It has taken many millions of years for the animals you see today to develop the sort of bodies they need to help them to live comfortably and successfully in this world. Let us first consider a bird whose bones you have often examined when you had chicken for your dinner. You may have noticed when you cracked one of its bones that it was hollow, quite unlike a chop bone. This hollowness serves to make the bird light enough in weight so that it can easily get off the ground and be supported in the air. Next you might have noticed the bird's breastbone, quite unlike the flat one we have in front. For a chicken's breastbone is not only very thin but also has a high keel in front. It is thin of course for lightness' sake and the high keel provides a place to attach the strong muscles a bird needs to operate its wings. Did you know that the tender white meat on the chicken and turkey are muscles?

When you watch a live bird you will see that the knee joint is high on the leg concealed under the body feathers. What appears to be the knee joint much lower is really the ankle. You might easily guess this by the fact that it doesn't bend the leg backward like a knee but forward like the ankle. This enables the bird to squat which is very important when it roosts on a tree at night.

When you think of a bird you think of feathers naturally. Since feathers have a number of purposes there are a number of different kinds. First, there are contour feathers, of which there are three varieties. There are those which cover a bird's body. Many of these have rounded shafts so that they can follow the curves of the body. Second, there are wing feathers with strong hollow shafts and usually with the barbs on both sides of them unequal in length. In this way one set of barbs lies over the next in line thus giving the wing a smooth surface. The third kind of contour feathers are the tail feathers. These too have strong, hollow shafts but their barbs on both sides are equal in length. Tail feathers have squared-off ends, not pointed ones like the wing feathers. This enables them to be used as a brake when the bird comes in to land.

Some feathers, called down, do not have any shaft at all. They are simply a number of barbs arising like a tuft from the same place. These serve to keep the heat of a bird's body in during cold weather. Then a bird will fluff out its feathers to make spaces between them in order that the heat of its body cannot escape.

Contour feathers are waterproof and keep a bird dry, so that water will run off them "like off a duck's back." Only a few kinds of birds lack this sort of protection. Cormorants are among these and you will often see these sea-birds standing on rocks with their wings stretched out for drying.

Birds that feed in shallow waters use various ways for doing so. Some ducks which feed off the bottom upend themselves and keep that position by paddling vigorously. Such feeding is called dabbling. Watch the mallard ducks as they seem to stand on their heads in the water while they dredge their food off the muddy bottom of the shallow lakes.

Other birds will dive down into the water and will sometimes disappear so suddenly that you may wonder what has become of them. Grebes almost seem to somersault as they dive into the water so quickly.

There are some birds which lay their bills flat along the top of the water and skim off the insects, and of course the gulls with their pointed bills pick their food daintily off the surface of the water as they fly away from their screeching fellows who were out for the same morsel.

Look closely at the beaks of the birds, and you will perhaps be able to discover for yourselves by their shapes just how each bill is used for feeding.

Well, have a good time with Mrs. Long. You are lucky to have her as your leader, and I'm sure you'll have a wonderful time on this trip.

— JANET NICKELSBURG, *Education Chairman*

SAN FRANCISCO BAY MODEL

The Sierra Club and Save the San Francisco Bay Association are having a joint meeting at the San Francisco Bay Model in Sausalito at 9a.m., **Saturday, February 6**. The U.S. Army Engineers who built the model will explain their studies and show the model in operation. The showing has been especially arranged for us, as it is not generally shown on week-ends. We are extending an invitation to the Audubon Society and all friends of conservation to join our group on that date — HAROLD G. SHARP *for the Sierra Club*.

The S.F. Bay Model is in a large building of the U.S. Army Engineers on the waterfront just off the main street (Bridgeway Blvd.) through Sausalito. Parking space is available at the site.

"NEW ENGLAND SAGA" — FEBRUARY 24

"New England Saga" will be the next Audubon Wildlife Film to come to Berkeley. Dr. John Douglas Bulger, the photographer, will personally present his color film in the Berkeley Little Theatre, Allston Way at Grove St., on **Wednesday, February 24**, at 8 p.m. (Tickets may be purchased at the door for \$1.50.)

This beautiful film depicts the unforgettable scenery of New England from the mountains to the sea throughout the four seasons. The photographer also reveals how man-made changes have caused the decline of some animals and the adaptations of others. The black duck, white-tailed deer, caribou and woodcock are among the variety of wildlife filmed in their native habitat.

Dr. John D. Bulger, of Pulaski, New York, obtained his Ph.D. in Wildlife Management from Cornell University, and became the Director of Education and Northeastern Field Representative for the National Wildlife Federation. Dr. Bulger began writing at an early age and has contributed to many magazines. His hobby of photography became a creative adjunct to writing, and his camera has focused on wildlife from the African bush to the ice floes of the Arctic Ocean. Dr. Bulger's films have been shown on nearly every television station in the United States.

On **February 15** at 8 p.m. KQED's Conservation program will include the Nature Conservancy's Jaeger Poorwill Preserve in the Chuckawalla Desert.

YOSEMITE TRIP TO BE MAY 21-23

Advance reservations may now be made for the annual field trip to Yosemite National Park scheduled for May 21-23, Friday night to Sunday. At Camp Curry, the Golden Gate Audubon Society has reserved 15 bungalows with bath (\$6 per person daily plus 4% tax) and 10 cabins without bath (\$3 per person daily, plus 4% tax). For reservations please send checks, payable to Golden Gate Audubon Society, to Miss Marjorie Atkinson, 4 Willow Lane, Berkeley, Calif., 94707. The field trip details will appear in a future issue of *The Gull*.

AUDUBON CANYON RANCH

Although many generous gifts have been made toward the purchase fund for Audubon Canyon Ranch, there is still a large sum to be raised before the purchase can be completed. On January 11, William S. Picher, Chairman of the Board of Directors, sent *The Gull* the following report from Erlene Hevel, Treasurer:

Full Cost	\$337,500	
Amount Paid	\$139,500	
Balance Due		\$198,000
Cash & Securities on hand	\$112,000	
Balance		\$86,000
Pledges	\$51,000	
Balance to be raised		\$35,000

A TOPATOPA DAM COULD DESTROY THE CONDOR

Although the California condor has diminished in numbers by one-third in the past 15 years and only about 40 of the giant birds survive, the species can be preserved, and its numbers can increase, if it is given adequate protection.

Two kinds of protection are needed. One is prevention of losses caused by persons who shoot at the birds out of ignorance or in contempt of the law. The second essential kind of protection is *complete sanctuary* — the absence of human disturbance — in the part of the Los Padres National Forest where the birds nest. If parent condors detect the presence of a person in the vicinity, they will stay away from their nest for a prolonged period. This can prove fatal to an incubating egg or to a fledgling thus left exposed. The extreme sensitivity of the species to human activity in the nesting area was observed and verified by Dr. Karl Koford.

The 53,000-acre Sespe Wildlife Range was established within the Los Padres National Forest in 1951 to keep people out of the mountainous wilderness where the great birds nest in shallow caves among the cliffs.

Nesting sanctuary for the condors will be destroyed if the proposed Topatopa reservoir is constructed according to plans currently advocated by the United Water Conservation District, a state-chartered corporation that sells water in the Santa Clara valley and the Oxnard coastal plain.

The Topatopa dam would be part of the so-called *Sespe Creek Project* upon which the Sacramento regional office of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is now doing a "detailed feasibility study." The Topatopa damsite is outside the Sespe Wildlife Area but little more than $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from the vital nesting sanctuary. The impounded water would extend 6 or 8 miles up the creek valley, creating an artificial lake roughly parallel to, and only $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 mile distant from the Sanctuary's northern boundary.

According to a preliminary report published by the Reclamation Bureau's regional office, it would cost \$45,735,000 to build Topatopa and associated conduits. Congressional tradition and policy require a favorable cost-benefit ratio if Congress is to authorize the project and advance federal money for construction. In order to show benefits exceeding the costs, the project planners have figured in "recreation benefits" of \$842,000 annually, and additional "fishery benefits" (for recreational fishing) of \$734,000. Thus the project has been promoted as a recreational boon for Southern California's millions. People would come from Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, and other cities, the advocates say, for "water skiing, camping, picnicking, hiking and riding at an estimated rate of 2,000,000 visitor-days per year." Moreover, the Bureau's preliminary report asserted "fishermen would visit the project at an estimated rate of 240,000 visitor-days per year at present" and "in 50 years, the rate would triple." Even "the 10-mile reach of Sespe Creek below Topatopa dam" is envisioned as "a year-round trout stream."

It requires no feat of imagination to envision the practical impossibility of patrolling the area for protection of the condor with that many people pouring into the vicinity.

What is worse, the proponents of Topatopa dam say a public highway must be built from the city of Fillmore northward *through the condor nesting sanctuary* to the damsite. Such a road is necessary, they insist, to provide access during construction and for recreation users.

In response to a query on November 30 from Mr. Ralph Dighton, an Associated Press science writer of Los Angeles, President Carl W. Buchheister of the National Audubon Society issued the following statement:

"The National Audubon Society recognizes that southern Ventura County has a water problem, but we do not believe the only possible solution is to build a reservoir and public recreation center on the border of the Sespe condor refuge, or a road to the damsite through the heart of the refuge. Heavy public use of the proposed Topatopa reservoir would be extremely dangerous to the condor. A public road through the refuge could well prove fatal . . . We believe the water engineers of the State of California and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation can find a solution of the water problem without sacrificing one of the world's rarest, most

spectacular, and most scientifically valuable birds." — *Audubon Leader's Conservation Guide*, Jan. 1, 1965.

CRYSTAL SPRINGS FIELD TRIP REPORT

A caravan of 21 cars spent a sunny but cool day running up a list of 66 species of birds on the December 13th field trip to the Crystal Springs Reservoir in San Mateo County. Hooded mergansers were the only scarce birds seen.

The following species were found on this trip: Common loon; horned, cared, western, and pied-billed grebes; double-crested cormorant, great blue heron, Canada goose, mallard, gadwall, pintail, green-winged teal, American widgcon, shoveler, redhead, ring-necked duck, lesser scaup, common goldeneye, bufflehead, ruddy duck, hooded merganser, turkey vulture, red-tailed hawk, marsh hawk, sparrow hawk, California quail, American coot, killdeer, common snipe, willet; glaucous-winged, ring-billed, and mew gulls; band-tailed pigeon, mourning dove, Anna's hummingbird, red-shafted flicker, downy woodpecker, black phoebe, scrub jay, common crow, chestnut-backed chickadee, plain titmouse, common bush-tit, wren-tit, Bewick's wren, robin, varied thrush, western bluebird, ruby-crowned kinglet, water pipit, loggerhead shrike, Hutton's vireo, Audubon's and Townsend's warblers, house sparrow, western meadowlark, red-winged and Brewer's blackbirds, house finch, rufous-sided and brown towhees, Oregon junco, white-crowned, golden-crowned, and song sparrows.

— CARLYLE SATHER, *Leader & Historian*

FIELD OBSERVATIONS

Jan. 7 — Oliver Allen found a dead parakeet auklet (fresh condition) on the beach south of Rio del Mar.

RODEO LAGOON, Marin County — On November 29 Bob and Val DaCosta observed a pigeon hawk at Rodeo Lagoon. About two weeks later in the same area Val found a dead pigeon hawk with its neck and wing broken.

OAKLAND — Barrow's goldeneye arrived at Lake Merritt in time for the Christmas census of January 3.

BAY FARM ISLAND, Alameda (in the "conservation spotlight") — On December 17 an American bittern, three common snipe and a common gallinule were at the small pond near the golf course. Eleanor Hebard reports that the bittern was found again on Christmas count day, January 3. Near McCartney Road, Mrs. Hebard observed a Say's Phoebe on December 17 and January 2.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA — Two **blue-footed boobies** have been wintering at Puddingstone Reservoir (Pomona). In the Los Angeles Audubon Society's *Western Tanager* for January, Arnold Small writes that Leo Best of Azusa phoned Audubon House on November 16 that he suspected he had found two blue-footed boobies at Puddingstone Dam. His observation was confirmed on November 18 by Herb Clarke and Mr. Small. When the latter located the boobies sitting on their favorite buoys, he approached within five feet of them by boat. According to information obtained from the employees at the lake, the boobies had been present there since early October.

Arnold Small also reports in *The Western Tanager* that the white-tailed tropicbird had reappeared in Southern California:

"Wes Hettrick of Santa Ana alerted me on Nov. 30 to the fact that the bird had reappeared, and this time had shown a marked preference for radio-controlled powered aircraft being flown near Santa Ana."

Eleanor Pugh and Shirley Wells saw it make a quick pass near the field on December 5.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Most of us think of February as the month containing the birth anniversary dates of two great Americans. We may have used these holidays as a chance to take all or a part of our family for an early spring outing. Each of us is probably already making tentative plans for at least a part of our summer's recreational activities. Many of us are very active students of certain phases of the out-of-doors life we call nature. This is very good for us, and by our thoughts and actions should also be good for our associates. Some of our enthusiasm about nature should transfer from us to our fellow men so they, too, can help swell the numbers of people trying to save some of the natural out-of-doors for the future citizens of this great land.

In our enthusiasm for seeing for ourselves some of the wonderful things of nature, we can follow in the footsteps of leaders like Washington and Lincoln. The most important thing we can do is to let our interest for and our love of nature be such that others will follow and join and help us conserve the beauties of nature we so highly prize.

— A. WARREN LARSON, *President*



IN MEMORIAM



With deep regret we report the sad news that HAROLD G. PETERSON passed away on January 18. Mr. Peterson had generously devoted his time and effort to the Golden Gate Audubon Society as Field Trips Chairman for seven years, as Treasurer for four years, and as Vice President for one year. We extend deepest sympathy to his family.

SANCTUARY AND MEMORIAL GIFTS

The following gifts of remembrance were made to Audubon Canyon Ranch:

In Honor of:

The Zweigart Family

In Memory of:

Charles C. Rueger

John M. Griffin

Walter M. Smith

Hugo F. Holm

Gift of:

Phyllis Zweigart

Gift of:

Emma L. Rueger

Mrs. Doris E. Griffin

Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay Campbell

Mr. and Mrs. D. G. Pedgrift

— DR. ALBERT BOLES, *Sanctuary & Memorial Fund Chairman*



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FEBRUARY

GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

Established January 25, 1917 A Branch of the National Audubon Society since 1948

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Vice President.....	Miss Bertha Underhill.....	35 Tamalpais Rd., Berkeley	848-0131
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Canyon Ranch Fund Raising.....	Mrs. Myra Browne.....	482 Broadmoor, San Leandro	568-1921..

Claims for missing numbers of THE GULL should be sent to the Editor. Changes of address should be sent to the Membership Chairman.

Monthly meetings second Thursday, 7:30 p.m. Joint Membership, Local and National, \$8.50 per year, includes AUDUBON MAGAZINE and THE GULL. Subscription to THE GULL separately \$2.00 per year.

Visit the Conservation Center of the NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

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